

East Park Energy: EN010141 – Further Information

Ecology and Biodiversity: Deadline 6

The applicant has not submitted adequate wintering bird data in relation to the development area. There are gaps in the survey effort (including missing months according to the recognised standard methodology, guided by BTO WeBS reports), which mean that the assessment of impacts on wintering birds is not comprehensive.

For example, Field 312 has only been surveyed in the latter winter survey and therefore, requires a second wintering bird survey due to its highlighted importance, having recorded a high count of 450 golden plover and 500 lapwing (a significant flock of SPA qualifying birds).

Field 44 meets the Functionally Linked Land (FLL) criteria for the Upper Nene Valley Special Protection Area (SPA) (see below). Golden plover (a mobile species) uses this field for a range of activities including feeding and roosting. Indeed, this field had more than 1% of the cited SPA population identified on more than one occasion over successive years, despite being slightly over the 10km 'limit' at 11.5km (at the closest point to the SPA). It is notable that 'functional connectivity' under the Habitats Regulations refers to how well plants and animals can move between separated 'natural' areas, based on the landscape layout and their movement skills (see below).

Lapwing are also considered to be an important part of the winter bird assemblage for this SPA as 56 individuals equate to 1% of the cited figures.

Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA)

Adequate objective scientific evidence has not been provided by the applicant to the Competent Authority to assess the development under the Habitats Regulations. It should be noted that HRA applies to the development alone or in combination with other plans or projects.

Comprehensive wintering bird data is needed to follow through the three-stage process (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/nationally-significant-infrastructure-projects-advice-on-habitats-regulations-assessments>).

Requirement for Further Wintering Bird Surveys; and Need for Habitats Regulations Assessment

At present, there is a risk that the applicant may breach legislation in relation to the

Habitats Regulations.

It is recommended that an independent suitably qualified and experienced surveyor is appointed to undertake further bird surveys.

The Competent Authority, the applicant and other relevant stakeholders should re-examine the requirement for HRA.

Submitted by Dr Helen Stark, Ecologist. MCIWEM C.WEM, 18th August 2026.